



The Importance of Kindness.

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.—St. Matt. xxv. : 40.

Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.—St. Matt. xxv. : 45.

"True worth is in being, not seeming. In doing, each day that goes by. Some little good, not in the dreaming Of great things to do, by-and-bye. For whatever men say in their blindness, And spite of the fancies of youth, There is nothing so kindly as kindness, And nothing so loyal as truth."

We are all inclined to look over the fence for grander work to do than we see within our reach; but, whatever our dreams of future service may be—and those who have no longing to do great and noble deeds are not likely ever to achieve them—let us be very careful not to pass by, as of little importance, the daily opportunities of kindness. It is folly to congratulate ourselves that we are "no worse than our neighbors," as if the only thing to be considered were our negative virtue—if there be such a thing. We shall be judged for what we are, instead of being acquitted because we are not murderers, thieves or liars. In that respect the Last Judgment will be different from the judgment of an earthly assize. Our Lord has given us one vivid picture of that great Day when all the souls of men shall give account for their deeds, and shall be judged according to what they have done or left undone. Without any hesitation, He divides all mankind into two classes—called the sheep and the goats. How does He distinguish between the two? Does He say that the souls on the left hand have lived lives of reckless wickedness, while those on the right have been moral and respectable? If you read carefully the account given in St. Matt. xxv. 31-46, you will see that one difference, and only one, is mentioned as the final cause for reward or punishment. Those on the right hand have been actively and persistently kind to the "least" of Christ's brethren—those who could not be expected to make them any return—while those on the left, though they may have gone regularly to church and been severely moral, have allowed countless opportunities of kindness to those "least" of Christ's brethren, and their own brethren, to slip by them. "And these," it is sternly said, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." A terrible retribution for a small offence, we may, perhaps, think, but then we shall not be judging but judged,—on which side of the King shall we stand? Will He say to us: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." Or will He say that when He—in the person of the least of His brethren—was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick or in prison, we made no effort to help Him? The judgment lies in our own hands now, which side do we intend—God helping us—to stand on?

We know perfectly well that no excuses can be made. It will be of no use to plead that we would gladly have done all these things, if we had been rich enough, or had had time. Our Lord has told us plainly that a poor widow gave "more" than all the rich people who cast their gifts into God's Treasury. He has said that even a cup of cold water will be an acceptable gift, and that a man will be accepted according to that he "hath," and not according to that he "hath not." The poor will probably be found to have given a great

deal larger gifts than the rich. As for the tremendous importance of kindness, there are several parables intended to teach that. There is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. In that parable, there is no hint given that the rich man was punished for anything whatever except selfish disregard of another's needs. He was not unkind—except in a negative fashion—but he simply let the chance of being kind drift past him day after day. He lived for selfish enjoyment alone. Let us be very careful that we do not follow his example. Then we have the beautiful picture of the Good Samaritan, who seems to set before us Christ Himself. He was kind, very kind, to the wounded stranger who needed help and who was lying right in his path. The priest and the Levite may have gone on their way, thinking of the importance of the service at the Temple towards which they were hastening. They may have tried to satisfy their consciences by saying that the Temple service was too important to be hindered in any way, and that they had no time to loiter.

Why is it that so much stress is laid on active kindness? Surely it is because kindness is the outward sign of Love. Love is the great and important thing, without which deeds of kindness will be worthless in the sight of God and men.

"It is not the deed we do, Though the deed be never so fair, But the love that the dear Lord looketh for, Hidden with lowly care In the heart of the deed so fair. The love is the priceless thing, The treasure our treasures must hold, Or ever the Lord will take the gift, Or tell the worth of the gold. By the love that cannot be told, Behold us, the rich and the poor, Dear Lord, in Thy service draw near, One consecrateth a precious coin, One droppeth only a tear; Look, Master, the love is here!"

If good works are performed in a cold, hard spirit, with the intention of trying to win an eternal reward or satisfy a hard Master, they certainly will not satisfy Him. Love is the fruit of the Spirit, and fruit grows from the inside, it is not hung on to the branches like oranges on a Christmas-tree. Men may possibly be deceived by outside kindness which has no root in the heart, but God is never deceived. He will not judge our deeds as they appear in the sight of man, but as they really are in His sight. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." Gifts offered to be seen of men will receive "no reward" from God! How much money is given away for the sake of display? When a subscription list is taken around we ask, "how much are other people giving?" and our contributions are graded accordingly. We give, sometimes at least, not as an offering to God, but rather because we don't want to be thought less generous than our neighbors. It is not only what we do, but why we do it that must be considered, if we aspire to please our God.

Some clever person has given instructions as to the best way of dropping money into the contribution-plate at church. He says: "If you feel particularly mean, and have only a penny to bestow, you must keep it well covered in your hand, and when the plate is under your nose, you must, with a quick, nervous motion, let your mite fall so that it shall escape observation. Second, if you have a quarter, or any other silver coin of a considerable size to you, hold it in plain sight between your forefingers, and when you deposit it, let it drop from a lofty elevation, so that it may make a musical jingle when it reaches its destination. Thirdly, if you contemplate offering a bill, you must not take the money out of your pocket until the happy time comes, when your neighbor can best see your

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